

Barnabas 11:1–10 [A.D. 74]).

Hermas

“‘I have heard, sir,’ said I, ‘from some teacher, that there is no other repentance except that which took place when we went down into the water and obtained the remission of our former sins.’ He said to me, ‘You have heard rightly, for so it is’” (*The Shepherd* 4:3:1–2 [A.D. 80]).

Ignatius of Antioch

“Let none of you turn deserter. Let your baptism be your armor; your faith, your helmet; your love, your spear; your patient endurance, your panoply” (*Letter to Polycarp* 6 [A.D. 110]).

Second Clement

“For, if we do the will of Christ, we shall find rest; but if otherwise, then nothing shall deliver us from eternal punishment, if we should disobey his commandments. . . . [W]ith what confidence shall we, if we keep not our baptism pure and undefiled, enter into the kingdom of God? Or who shall be our advocate, unless we be found having holy and righteous works?” (*Second Clement* 6:7–9 [A.D. 150]).

Justin Martyr

“Whoever are convinced and believe that what they are taught and told by us is the truth, and professes to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to beseech God in fasting for the remission of their former sins, while we pray and fast with them. Then they are led by us to a place where there is water, and they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn: ‘In the name of God, the Lord and Father of all, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit,’ they receive the washing of water. For Christ said, ‘Unless you be reborn, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’” (*First Apology* 61:14–17 [A.D. 151]).

Theophilus of Antioch

“Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration—all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God” (*To Autolycus* 12:16 [A.D. 181]).

Clement of Alexandria

“When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we become immortal . . . ‘and sons of the Most High’ [Ps. 82:6]. This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins, a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted, an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation” (*The Instructor of Children* 1:6:26:1 [A.D. 191]).

Tertullian

“Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. . . . [But] a viper of the [Gnostic] Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism—which is quite in accordance with nature, for vipers and asps . . . themselves generally do live in arid and waterless places. But we, little fishes after the example of our [Great] Fish, Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water. So that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew full well how to kill the little fishes—by taking them away from the water!” (*Baptism* 1 [A.D. 203]).

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“Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins” (ibid., 7:2).

Hippolytus

“And the bishop shall lay his hand upon them [the newly baptized], invoking and saying: ‘O Lord God, who did count these worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled with your Holy Spirit and send upon them thy grace [in confirmation], that they may serve you according to your will’” (*The Apostolic Tradition* 22:1 [A.D. 215]).

Cyprian of Carthage

“While I was lying in darkness . . . I thought it indeed difficult and hard to believe . . . that divine mercy was promised for my salvation, so that anyone might be born again and quickened unto a new life by the laver of the saving water, he might put off what he had been before, and, although the structure of the body remained, he might change himself in soul and mind. . . . But afterwards, when the stain of my past life had been washed away by means of the water of rebirth, a light from above poured itself upon my chastened and now pure heart; afterwards, through the Spirit which is breathed from heaven, a second birth made of me a new man” (*To Donatus* 3–4 [A.D. 246]).

Aphraahat the Persian Sage

“From baptism we receive the Spirit of Christ. At that same moment in which the priests invoke the Spirit, heaven opens, and he descends and rests upon the waters, and those who are baptized are clothed in him. The Spirit is absent from all those who are born of the flesh, until they come to the water of rebirth, and then they receive the Holy Spirit. . . . [I]n the second birth, that through baptism, they receive the Holy Spirit” (*Treatises* 6:14:4 [A.D. 340]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

“If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who, even without water, will receive baptism, for the Savior calls martyrdom a baptism [Mark 10:38]. . . . Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness” (*Catechetical Lectures* 3:10, 12 [A.D. 350]).

Basil the Great

“For prisoners, baptism is ransom, forgiveness of debts, the death of sin, regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, a chariot to heaven, a royal protector, a gift of adoption” (*Sermons on Moral and Practical Subjects* 13:5 [A.D. 379]).

Council of Constantinople I

“We believe . . . in one baptism for the remission of sins” (*Nicene Creed* [A.D. 381]).

Ambrose of Milan

“The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. Whoever comes, therefore, to the washing of Christ lays aside his sins” (*Commentary on Luke* 2:83 [A.D. 389]).

Augustine

“It is an excellent thing that the Punic [North African] Christians call baptism salvation and the sacrament of Christ’s body nothing else than life. Whence does this derive, except from an ancient and, as I suppose, apostolic tradition, by which the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal? This is the witness of Scripture too” (*Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 1:24:34 [A.D. 412]).

“The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration” (ibid., 2:27:43).

“Baptism washes away all, absolutely all, our sins, whether of deed, word, or thought, whether sins original or added, whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted” (*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3:3:5 [A.D. 420]).

“This is the meaning of the great sacrament of baptism, which is celebrated among us: all who attain to this grace die thereby to sin—as he himself [Jesus] is said to have died to sin because he died in the flesh (that is, ‘in the likeness of sin’)—and they are thereby alive by being reborn in the baptismal font, just as he rose again from the sepulcher. This is the case no matter what the age of the body. For whether it be a newborn infant or a decrepit old man—since no one should be barred from baptism—just so, there is no one who does not die to sin in baptism. Infants die to original sin only; adults, to all those sins which they have added, through their evil living, to the burden they brought with them at birth” (*Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love* 13[41] [A.D. 421]).

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